NEW POEMS

BY

HERBERT TRENCH

Coburn Collection

Alvin Langdon Cob
from 47

STARLIGHT DISTILLETH.

Tree by tree filleth—
What do they sigh at ?
Field by field thrilleth,
Low comes the fiat :
" Let him that willeth
Cease from his riot,
Starlight distilleth
Do thóu be quiet.

Night the tremendous
Grasps thee and veils thee,
Slow thy stupendous
Intelligence fails thee ;
I the Star-crowded
Outsoar and outsink thee,
No more care-clouded
Needst thou bethink thee !
Let my primordial
Stupor that seizes
Cure, with the cordial
For all thy diseases . . . . "

Field by field thrilleth,
What do they sigh at ?
Sleep the soul filleth
Man no more willeth -
Starlight distilleth ;
All Earth is quiet.

H.T.

Work by the same Author

DEIRDRE WEDDED

AND NINETEEN OTHER POEMS

INCLUDING

A Silver Birch
Song for the Funeral of a Boy
Come, let us make Love deathless
Shakespeare
A Charge
In the Roman Amphitheatre, Verona

NEW POEMS

APOLLO & THE SEAMAN
THE QUEEN OF GOTHLAND
STANZAS TO TOLSTOY
AND OTHER LYRICS

BY

HERBERT TRENCH

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Apollo and the Seaman	1
An Ode to Beauty	33
The Voice from the Column	39
Stanzas to Tolstoy in his Old Age	44
Lindisfarne	49
Chant Sung in Darkness	51
O Dreamy, Gloomy, Friendly Trees	54
Old Anchor Chanty	55
The Questioners	58
I Heard a Soldier	62
A Song—Her, my own Sad Love Divine	63
The Crocus	64
Inscription for a Sword of Honour	66
Daughters of Joy	67
Almond, Wild Almond	71
Musing on a Great Soldier	73
When Mary Bathes	75
Jean Richepin's Song	76
Multatuli Remoulded	78
Chorus at the Green Bear Inn	81
To a Nightingale heard upon a Hilltop before Dawn	83

PAGE

The Gemless Ring 85
The Requital 87
The Reparation 89
Dark, Dark the Seas and Lands 90
Ode on Armenian Massacre 91
There Comes a Moment of the Twilight . . 94
Killary 96
The Queen of Gothland 99
The Shepherd 115
Stanzas on Poetry 119
O Birds of the Air 124
I Seek Thee in the Heart Alone . . . 125
Ode at Assouan on the Nile 126
Notes 129

APOLLO & THE SEAMAN

APOLLO AND THE SEAMAN

I

APOLLO through the woods came down — Apollo's coming.
Furred like a merchant fine,
And sate with a Sailor at an Inn
Sharing a jug of wine.

Had sun-rays, spilled out of a storm,
Thither the God conveyed?
Or some green and floating cloudlet caught
On the fringes of a glade?

For none had known him by his gait
Descending from the hills,
Though far and wide before him blew
The friendly daffodils;

No shepherd had discovered him
On upland pasture bare
By dew-pond or green Roman camp;
No voice aloft in air

Along lone barrows of great downs
With kine in rolling coombes,
Where bells blow up from all the plain
To headlands spring perfumes,

Proclaimed him to those coombes and folds
Of little lambs unyeaned,
Or sung him to the billowy woods
With spray of buds begreened,
Where spreads in haze the snowy maze
Of orchards deep-ravined—

Telling the dingles of the thrush
To overflow with sound,
Warning the grassy commons all
In vales for miles around :

" Wake! shady forest-coverts wide!
Wake! skylit river-sward!
Chases and meres and misty shires
Be ready for your lord! "

But he would not stay nor tarry there
On the blithe edge of the down,
To the sea-coast his errand was
And the smoke-hanging town.

Far off he saw its harbours shine
And black sea-bastions thronged
With masts of the sea-traffickers
For whom his spirit longed.

Far off he heard the windlass heaved
And the creaking of the cranes,
Gay barges hailed and poled along,
And the rattling fall of chains,

Till by the windows of that Inn
He sate and took his ease
Where the bowsprits of the swarthy ships
Came thrusting to the quays.

II

Apollo. "And why are you cast down, sailor? The rumour.
And why are you cast down?
With lapfuls of the guineas light
Come you not back to town?

Your feet that must have run in air
Aloft the slippy mast
Are they not glad to land, my lad,
On steady ground at last?"

Up from his brown and branded hands
A heavy chin he raised,
And sidelong through the harbour bluffs
Looked out like man amazed.

Seaman. "If you had cruised as I have cruised
The world for many a year,
Your blood like mine it would have struck
At the strange news I hear.

O the Moon went riding high last night
And the dance along the quays,
But I could not find it in my heart
To care for shows like these;

For while still I felt the rollers' lift
Bear on through the dark land
And the little houses here still rock
And sway—they would not stand—

I heard them calling in the streets
That the ship I serve upon—
The great ship Immortality—
Was gone down, like the sun. . . ."

III

Apollo. " And whence did that craft hail, sailor, The Ship.
Of which you seem so fond ? "
Seaman. " It was some harbour of the East,
Back o' beyond, back o' beyond ! "

Apollo. " What shipwrights' hammers rang on her,
The stout ship and the leal ?
In what green forest inlet lay
Her cradle and her keel ? "

Seaman. " I think some arm of the sea-gods
Framed us her stormy frame,
And ribbed and beamed and stanchioned her,
And gave her strength a name.

Never, Sir Traveller, have you seen
A sight the half as fine
As when she hove up from the East
On our horizon-line!"

Apollo. "I have seen a dead god on the Nile,
Paddled by tribes of bronze,
Under mud-built villages of palms
Glide, statelier than swans,
And Isis' frail moon-golden skiff
Restore him to that barque of life
Whose years are millions.

I have seen Jason and his men
Into bows of Argo piece
Oak of Dodona, ere she slid
To find the golden fleece;
Ay, and triremes of the marble isles
Pursue from Salamis.

I have seen master-galleys rise
Dipping in mass the oar,
And centaur-carven caravels,
And galleons big with ore,
Dromonds, and mountain'd argosies
That sack the globe no more:

Great sails, like yellow weeping clouds,
Heap'd thunder, roaring squall—
And their fadings, like the fleet of stars
That floateth over all."

Seaman. " Well—ask all navies such as these—
Was she not more divine
Who, challenged by Death's muffled drums,
Gave Death the countersign ?

Ah, to serve on her in time of war !
Why it set aflame your blood
To feel her in the slack of peace
Come booming up the flood,

Thousands of wings about her bows
As she cast away the deep,
The morning star swung from a spar
And every sail asleep.

And her masts ! Land-locked and shut away
From the sea-winds' scud and psalm,
Her masts, they trembled in a leash—
You laid on them your palm,
And they quivered over with great life
That never could be calm.

No frothings in your purple wake
On the lone path to the pole
White as the spread of sail on her
That lent wings to your soul—"

Apollo. " What was her build, that boat of yours
So proud upon the sea ?
What was her make of hull and deck,
What suit of sails had she ? "

Seaman. " O her stretch of sail so white, so white,
By no man's hand unfurled,
Was Heaven ! "

Apollo. " And the decks you kept so bright ? "

Seaman. " Were like this bustling World."

Apollo. " And the hold and cockpit out of sight,
Pitch dark and ill to smell,
Full of the friends of your delight ? "

Seaman. " That was the pit of Hell ! "

IV

Seaman. " How think of her, gone down, gone down ! The tidings.
How think of her decayed !
Or that the maker of that ship
Could let his creature fade !
More unbridled — unforgettable — was never creature made.

Gone by the board, those swinging spars
That seemed through storm to climb !
Sent down, like any cockle-shell,
To the tangle and the slime !

Did he that takes the narrow sounds
His monstrous hands between
Whirl her among his crazy locks
Into an eddy green ?

Was it fog-bound, on a foul coast,
With not enough sea-room,
Or clear of land that she was lost,
Where the hard gale can blow home ?

Was it ice-floe in the sheeted foam
Ambushed her ? or some ledge
Of false lights—or uncharted reef—
Broke her back upon its edge ?

Perhaps even she was seized at last
Off some island precipice
With weariness, like man's weariness,
Of everything that is,

And stranded so till the fresh flood
That through the channel swings
Crumbled that side like a sea-cliff
As one crumbles little things." . .

. . . . . .

Apollo. " Her end was none, my lad, of these;
But first, if you must know,
Mutiny of those friends of yours
In irons down below."

Seaman. " And how got you, Sir Merchantman,
This news—or bitter jest ? "

Apollo. " Sir, my trade is bringing light to all
From the East unto the West.

Nay, he that built your famous boat
From the old coasts to fly
And bear you ever out and on
Was I, and none but I ! "

With that the sailor clutch'd the board ;
Wine spilt out of his glass
Dripp'd to the floor, but not a sound
From his parch'd mouth would pass.

V

Apollo (musing). The tale of Apollo.

"There was no whisper out of space,
Scarcely a ripple ran
From thine incommensurable side
O dim leviathan,

When from afar I came in flight,
Rumours 'gainst thee to probe,
Leaving far off, engraved in shade,
Many a dreaming silver globe
And approaching thee on the middle sea
Wrapt in my darkling robe.

From that Ship becalm'd, that triple-tier'd
Of Heaven and Earth and Hell,
Spread strange commotion as I near'd
Over the starred sea-swell.

Arcturus, I remember, shone—
That rebel ! mirror'd bright,
And Saturn in his moat of moons
Glass'd in unsounded night ;
All the million-litten vault below
Breathed, in a slumber light.

As in some mountain forest glade
When frosts ere dawn are brisk
And early spring boughs knitted close
Across the red moon's disk,

And the rimy turf rings hard to hoof
Of the light branch-feeding deer,
One sees upflushing some glen's brow
Camp-fire of mountaineer

Bivouack'd below ; shag-bearded pines,
All gnarled, loom down estranged
At the wanton fire about their knees
With the moon-fire interchanged—

So strange her gaunt dishevelled spars
Loomed down out of the sky ;
Sails that had drunk Earth's soul immense
Hung pierced and slung awry,

My inwoven eternal blazonries
An idle tattered shame.
Was this the keen fire-spirited prow
Ark of the heaving flame

That sun-stampt and illumined ship,
That keel of mystery,
Loosed, after toilings beyond count,
To plunge from the Daedalian mount
And to stem futurity ?

Now, because mine own insignia badged
Each white celestial vail,
Rage seized me, like your emperor
Trajan—how goes the tale ?—
Who on Tigris, twice defeated, tore
His gold wolves from the sail. . . .

And as from forge doors in her decks
Escaped, lulled, rose again,
Confused blasts—insolent uproar
From torch'd and naked men,
As it were some wind from Africa's
Tropic and demon'd fen.

And beast-like shadows ran and flashed ;
Knotted at grips they swayed
And writhed. Unkennelled Hell was loose
And swarmed in escalade.

Hard-pressed my righteous stood at bay ;
But when Hell's desperate brood
Saw me, they shouted, '*Lord of light,*
Release !' And ruinous strew'd,
Fell on their faces on the decks
In breathless multitude.

But their leader, with inverted torch,
Stepp'd through them. Stern he comes,
Stirring their night-bound forest hearts
Like distant savage drums,

And cries aloud, ‘ *In this, in this—*
Shaking his torch—*is peace!*
Not thou, tardy deliverer,
But I, confer release!

Mighty shall be the high sea-flame!
Superb the funeral pyre
Of Heaven and Earth! . . . Kindle it, Hell!
To glut this God's desire!’

He paused, with black distorted arms
Rear'd, long before the crash—
Like some hollow oak that long outliveth
Coil of the lightning's lash ;

Then fell. Majestic enemy,
Time with thy falling rang!
He, first of all the ship, was free
And fled without a pang.

. . . . . .

Out of the throng'd expanse, skull-bare
Heads rose and dropped again.
They quailed, they flinched before my gaze,
My light to them was pain.
Shadows of wreckage on the masts
Went streaming down the main.

Stooping above one cowering shape,
I raised it by the chin,
Upturned the pallid chronicle
And read the tale therein ;
Read the thing purposed, by the bone,
And the thing done, by the skin.

The lecherous, wan, with eyelid lined,
Heavy-soul'd, torn with vice,
The murderous with the flitting smile,
The drunkard blue as ice ;
Incomplete and colourable things
Whose breathings must be lies.

All the sweet neighbours that men take
Within their breasts to thrive
Had blown like glass the body's case
Or stamped its clay alive.
So I mused—(All hung upon a hair !)
Why need the dead survive ?

In one face, stony, white and bleak,
Had passions scooped their bed ;
Old lavas down the rigid cheek,
Meseemed, were still unshed ;

And I read the eyes of him that thirsted
Only for things beyond ;
Whose strata, tossed in molten dreams,
Would never correspond
With things about him, for he willed
To die unparagoned.

. . . . . .

Unseen above them so bowed down
Like bent and sodden corn,
Should I cast them with derision back,
That throng of the forlorn,

Herding them with derision cold
As with a hand of steel,
Condemn them to endurance back
And still to think and feel,
While the tears that might not fall for them
Did on my cheek congeal ?

And in that pause their mournful hope
Swelling like the undertone
That dins within the wildest gale
Utter'd aloud mine own.

Blindly they stretched their scarry hands,
Their piteous hands, to me :
' Since bonds we cannot bear, nor sight,
Be thou our sanctuary !
Open again the narrow gate—
Let us no longer be !'

Then lo ! my righteous, whose wounds still
With bitter conflict bled,
Veer'd in their wrath, hoarsely unjust,
Arraigned me for these dead—
Spat on their own high bliss, and craved
To stand in Hades' stead.

Had all white-priested Egypt, then,
Not taught thee to perdure,
My Boat of Years ? Lo, in man's dust
So mixed—so long impure—
Came light ! Then I summoned up each soul

And round its neck secure
Fastened this token : ' *Judge thyself*,'
That justice might be sure.

. . . . . .

Aloft, long since, I saw, had fled
That viewless sanhedrim
Of presences starry-cresseted
Who erst through waters dim
Had breathed the towering sails along,
My faithful seraphim.

And I turned about in mournfulness
Steadfastly to behold
Bulwarks charred, ay, and drunken masts
And slow deep-labouring hold,

And the heeling of age-crumbled beams
And helmless spars divine—
Beheld the horror of those decks
Bloodied with mystic wine ;
Even the little fluttering genius reft
From the wrecked and flameless shrine.

And I cried to the white shape on the prow
Ascendant by my skill,
' O winged ardour, headless now,
To sound what wild sea-victory
Swing'st there, triumphant still ?
Why spared they wholly to shatter thee ?
Thy rippling veils from feet to breasts
Winds from the future fill

But I know my handiwork outworn,
And this bolted fabric vast
That disciplined through many wars
Man's courage in the past,—
And well, well, hath she served her Lord—
Unseaworthy at last!'

Then from ocean's frothy hazardous
Dream-element I caught
Her crew—every half-foundered soul
Wherewith her hold was fraught;

And I sang them back to steady Earth
After their wanderings long,
Both quick and dead. Hangs on thy breast
The token of my song?"

(He fumbled in his hairy breast
Yes—the '*Judge thyself*' hung there)
"And remembering then their mad outburst
Of quaint hope and despair

Who deemed each puny life should last
When nothing else escapes,
And the nations and the planets melt
Like breakers on the capes,

From laughter, from tears unquenchable,
Scarce able to forbear,
I smote the great hull to a ghost
And the mighty masts to air. ."

. . . . . .

Seaman. "What! is there not even left enough
Of that so noble craft,
A gang-board or a plank or two,
To lash into a raft?"

Apollo. "No, lad; you shall not ride in her;
But then you shall not weep;
Nor hear aloft her pipes of cheer
Nor the wail under the deep.

Yet sometimes like the Northern Lights
Hull-down—a radiance dim—
Loftier than air of Earth, up-sprung
To planes beyond its rim,

At hours when you are fever-struck
A phantom you may see,
Derelict—drifting out of hail—
Lost Immortality!"

VI

The rebuke. When the man knew the ship he loved
Had melted to a lie
He fronted him upon his feet
As who should Gods defy—
Syllables choked not in his throat,
He met him eye to eye.

Refreshed was he through long forborne
Anger. His spirit swelled
Manful—the stronger in his grief
By all that he had quelled.

Seaman. " This is your world-discovery !
This is the great landfall !
This coil of warehouses and quays
And taverns—this is all !

Well was it that we trusted you !
Else—how had we achieved
Good luck ? But then we had a friend
Wholly to be believed.

This is the country we have gained,
This land of milk and balm !
For this our innocent took wounds
And died without a qualm,
Drawn on as by a ghost, that ends
Like a catspaw in a calm !

Stay ! I have heard, how in action's heat
A captain in his tent
Sealed a despatch ; and the rider died
That with the letter went;
But the letter—saved—was found a blank.
You, who the message sent,
Say, how will you now make amends
For what was vainly spent ! "

Fell off, fell off the enshrouding furs—
The beamwork of the room
To its last crevices was lit ;
So terribly illume
The God's eyes—all his presence seemed
Outwardly to consume

As though all burning sovranties
And throbbings of the mind,
Condensed into a single flame,
Across that board confined
Shot the human shade, a skeleton,
Clean on the wall behind
The man.

Apollo. " Ah, fragment of my soul,
When I invented thee
To utter Mind, as guest and mate
Of a voiceless family,

And gave thee selfhood, barred with sleeps,
On yon ship's heaving shelves,
Selfhood that never can contrive—
However lightning-like it strive—
To escape, in its inmost, deepest dive
My Self *beneath* your selves,

I built through demiurgic powers,
Myriad human hopes and fears,
And laboured at this shipwright's task
A hundred thousand years.

Think'st thou I framed a vessel vain
As earthly ships of wood ?
Or that thy voyage never was,
And wasted all your blood ?
What ! Hast not felt the invisible
Nor faintly understood ?

Thou hast seen armies serve a name,
A rag, a tomb forlorn ;
And the tides of men obey a ghost,
The ghost of the unborn.

Thou hast felt the Passions' blindest roots
Quake up man's silly crust,
And rock thy reason from its state
And crack its towers to dust.

Thou hast seen the Gods figure forth races,
Surging out of the vast
On the crest of wave after wave, for aye
To sweep till time be past :—

Feel'st thou no wind *behind* those waves
All washing on one way ?
Organs of the invisible
Yes, thou hast felt their sway !

Deem'st those old faceless images,
' Truth,' ' Justice,' ' Liberty,'
Heralding symbols *thou* employ'st ?
They are employing thee !
Organs of the invisible
Yes, thou hast felt their sway.
All the buried city of thy heart
Knows thou art less than they.

But now get back upon high seas
Unknown and drear indeed,
Thou, the adventure of my cloud
And sailing of my seed ! "

Seaman. " Lord, I confess the things unseen
Closer the fountain-head
Than the wooden table in my grasp
Or yonder loaf of bread ;
But must we, ever-living one,
Go out when we are dead ?
When the arms that held us close and dear,
When the love that we are used
To mingle with, are wrenched away
And the body's kiss is loosed ? "

The God smiled, and with 'haviour soft
Leaning across the wine
Heavily took those shoulders young
Into his grasp divine.

Apollo. " Hearken ! I put you to the touch
My son, my prodigal—
Since every brave song hath its close
Your own life, end it shall ;
Yes, utterly shall meet an end.
Be it heroical !

And, born aboard, my rover stark,
Dread you to die aboard ?
To lay you down beside your love
With the sunset on your sword ? . . .

Apollo (continuing). "Voyage after voyage, how else, how else
Should I man's soul prepare
For the new venture, bolder yet,
On which he now must dare?— The New Ship

See! from the voyage whence you come now
You come not back the same;
Behind the door of your dull brow
Hath sprung up doubt and blame—

Defiance of me. That I praise.
This once low-cabined pate
Hollows deep-chambered—is become
Tribunal—hall of state
For the assembled thrones of angels—root
For an assize of fate!

Thou hast forgotten, whom I took
From lap of things inform
And flung to embraces of the sea
And caresses of the storm!
Now electrified, subtler-energied,
Starker-willed, battle-warm
Thou comest, thou comest again to me! . . .
Son of tumult, gloom enorm,
I have new jeopardy for thee
And new eyes yet to form!

O wrestler into consciousness
Stand upon Earth! Away!
Long hath the journey been by night,
But roseate breaks the day;
Like a scroll I unfold the mountain-tops
And the windings of the bay.

Awake! thou'rt already on the cruise
And shalt not see its end.
Earth is the ship! Thou shalt have time
To find the Earth thy friend!"

Seaman. "Is there a hand upon her helm?"
Apollo. "Weigh thou thine own heart-fires,
And her wash of overwhelming dawns,
And her tide that never tires—
Her tranquil heave of seasons—flowers—
All that in thee aspires!

How like an eagle on the abyss
With outspread wing serene
She circles!—thought rolls under her
And the flash from the unseen.
Here's to her mission, wingéd rock,
Bluff-bowed and heavy keel'd
Through the night-watches swinging on
Still under orders sealed!

No crystal gives a peep, my son,
Of her errand far and surgy;
No witch's magic brew of sleep
Nor smoke of thaumaturgy;
Nor, for the future, shall you reap
Much benefit of clergy.

But if thy former priestly ship
Failed of the port assigned,
The overwhelming globe takes on
Her altar-flame of mind.
See that the oils that feed the lamp
Fail not!"

Seaman. "What are those oils?"

Apollo. "Heroic, warm, abounding souls!
These are the sacred oils
On the fragrant thin-flamed thymele
Lost on the deep like melody—
They who, as I My Self disperse
In them through the tragic universe,
Scatter themselves in toils.

And I shall stream into their life
Waking—sense after sense—
New understandings—endless, no,
But more and more intense.
Till joy in the will that wafts the world
Buoyant as swimmers be
Makes thee divine, perhaps at last
Wholly delivers thee."

Seaman. And the man exclaimed, "Delivers me!
How, if this death descends?
I am a man and not a race.
What matters, if self ends?
Speak! quick, my brain is worn and cold,
Little it comprehends."

Apollo. " I shall tell thee, but as music tells.
I too, like thee, have striven.
I too am launched from the profound
And past ; I too am driven
In turn upon the stream of storms
From fountains beyond heaven ;
And to me, too, light is mystery
And the greater light half-given.

How can I make plain the goal obscure
Of thy journey but begun ? "
And again the God smiled on the man
And asked, " Hast thou a son ? "
He nodded. " And never yet hast guessed
That thou and he are one !
Yet leaf shall of leaf become aware
On the selfsame bough and stem,
Whose branches are murmuring everywhere
And the heaven floods all of them !

Between you—*between all that love*—
Runs no gulf wide nor deep,
But a sheen'd veil, thinner than any veil,
Thin as the veil of sleep.

Through the death-veil—looming silverly—
Through the self-veil's subtle strand,
Dawns it not ? For that dawn thy heart
Hath eye—shall understand
Before its seeing rock-walls melt
And cracks the mortal band.

For when once the whole consummate strength
Of thy slow-kindling mind
Can see in the *heart's* light at length
All the strange sons of mankind,
Then the Earth—that else were but a strait
Rock-sepulchre—is new :
Of what account to it is death ?
It is glowing, through and through,
It moveth, alive with a God's breath,
Translucent as the dew ! "

VIII

The embarcation

The last words in the rafters rang
And the bright haze sounded on ;
Walls, air and shadows vibrant still,
But the God himself was gone.

Was the thing dreamed ? The Tavern wall
Solid ? Still it rang.
Feverish he threw the lattice back
Outside fluttered and sang
Trees of a tract of narrow yards
Behind dark tenements,
The nearest garden vacant—rope
Eked out its broken fence.
Naked it lay—brown mould bestrewn
With refuse crockery—yet
A pear-tree in its darkest nook
Bowered it in delicate
Whiteness. Beyond its further pale

Above a wall-flower bed,
Women were hanging linen out :
One stoop'd a kerchief'd head.
In lime-trees idle rooks were cawing;
Even to his upper room
Came wafted from some distant plot
Fragrance like thyme's perfume ;
And, adrift from zigzag chimney-stacks
And ancient courtyards, soft
Blue smoke was breathed amongst the trees ;
Dazzling clouds moved aloft ;
Even to the window where he stood
A cherry stretched its limb,
Half the diaphanous clusters clear
Enlumined, and half dim.
Green swift immortal Spring was here—
Spring in her lovely trim—
And whether it were ship or no,
The Earth seemed good to him.
Had he been Greek, or nurtured well
In lore of sages gone,
He would have felt her like that ship
Ascribed to Hieron
Which, beside its deck-house luxuries
Of baths and bronzes fine,
Carried a pergola's green walk,
Shade-galleries of vine,
And for awnings fruit-espaliers
From buried urns in line.

Quitting the Inn he made for home,
And by many a cobbled wynd

Behung with mariners' wares, uphill
He strode with seething mind.
Above in the shady market-place
Unwonted silence reigned.
Under their patched umbrella stalls
Few flower-sellers remained ;
But one, with old face like a map
Wrinkled by good and evil hap,
Stretched forth her palm. It rained.
Ah, yes, it rained—sudden acold
The sky loured overcast.
Soon the pavements leapt with plashing drops ;
And as he hasty passed
He heard a burst of chanted sound,
And glanced up at the vast
Shadow that over huddled roofs
Loomed, pinnacled and grey. . . .
The spired cathedral thundrously
And widely seemed to sway ;
Like Earth upon her pilgrimage
Buffetting on from age to age,
It still was under way.

And on he trudged with peace at heart,
Rain pelting on his cheek,
But the shower half-ceased before he found
The bourne he seemed to seek.

A small house in a by-way dark
Beneath that April cloud,
And nigh the doorway he looked up
Keen-eyed. He could have vowed

It was his wife stood shining there,
Yon, where the lintel dripped.
With soft, profound, familiar look
Low-laughing forth she slipped ;

Her mute nod warned him (while her hair
Released bright drops that fell)
And bade him watch, but not disturb,
A happy spectacle.

Now vapour'd were the cobble-stones,
And the runnel where they stood
Fleeted adown the middle street,
Rays gleaming on its mud,
When lo ! he saw a boy, their son,
Squatted beside the flood,

Like the city's sole inhabitant
And lost to aught beside,
Wholly absorbed, aloof, intent,
Upon that ruffling tide

The boy embarked a faery ship
Of paper, white and gay,
And watched, with grave ecstatic smile,
Its glories whirled away.

OTHER POEMS

AN
ODE TO BEAUTY

I

BEAUTY, thou secret lamp, awake !
Tremble into sound !
Burn in me now, as thou didst break
Those glooms profound
When with laughter of Olympians we
Marched to a song,
Vagabonds young, vagabonds free,
Up the mountains long.
Our road over roots of Apennine
Wound up, star-proof,
For the thick-enwoven forest pine
Made it a roof
Trebled for the foot-weary wight—
The knapsack-bowed—
By shade of precipices, night
And brooding cloud.
Came a yellow diligence flashing down
Cheerily jingling,
Rocking from side to side, and soon
With the valleys mingling ;

And we overtook a team up-hill,
Some woodman's load,
Struggling though halted, breasting still
The invisible road.
Long after, his whip's crack and cry
And axle's plaint
Followed us up the forests high,
Submerged and faint.

II

We sang no more ; each aching sense
Craved silence, caring
But to climb on, on—forgetful whence
Or whither faring.
Cold sweat dript from us as we marched,
Grim fancies smote,
Imprisoned grew the spirit—parched
The stifled throat.
O for a breath up the ravines
To rift and rend
This muffling web of branchy screens
That never end !
Dulness, even melancholy, stole
From friend to friend
As we left the dark high road where whole
Forests impend
And took the path up the cliff's face,
Brushwood and stones,
Clambering up from base to base
On the Earth's bones. . . .

So hour by hour, until the escape.
At last—look back !
Low in the gorge 'twixt cape and cape
Battalion'd, black,
Creeps radiance : a flush aureoles
Yon crag ! It bridges
Veiled chasms—floods the expectant souls
Of sombre ridges. . . . .
Hail to thee, Moon ! Sudden she surged,
Far out and sheer,
Over vague plains immense, and purged
Our spirits clear,
Bathed our dust-heavy eyes with awe
And scope untold—
All sleeping Italy we saw
Fold beyond fold. . . . . .
Far down we saw one cloudlet curl
Glimmering and frail,
Opal and green and blue and pearl
Swam on its veil ;
And about us rocky pastures spoke
In herds of bells
And we saw the waterfalls like smoke
Blown from the fells
And aloft the fading arch of all
The stars, whose pouring
Maketh no thunder in its fall
Nor any roaring.

III

And then, ah then ! while in the bliss
  That yet is fear
Ranging with thee the great abyss
  O lovely Sphere
Did I remember, by some wand
  Invoked from sleep,
Another lamp, rising beyond
  Another deep . . . . .
How I, a wandering lute of verse,
  When grapes grew heavy
Had lodged in France with vintagers
  In a tavern leafy
And in a vine-dark corridor
  Of that rude inn
Had glimpse through a half-open door
  Of an arm within,
A woman's arm—bare, simple, pure,
  Holding a light
Shielded (herself the while obscure)
  In exquisite
Fingers translucent as a grape
  Bird-wings or wine
Enshading in soft blood-hued shape
  The candle-shine. . . .

IV

A poise, a ray, a moment's gleam,
  But, when they went
Against the wall as in a dream
  Witless I leant,
Knowing by that divine contour
  Of warmth and bloom
Some thought immortal lit that poor
  Rough-paven room.
Some eddy of the Infinite
  Force on its way
Had caught that arm and moulded it
  In mood of play;
That curve was of the primal Will
  Whose gesture high
Waved forth the choir of planets, still
  In ecstasy;
And the rhythm of its dreaméd lines
  Shall still flood on
Through souls beyond to-day's confines
  When we are gone,
Shall bear to the unborn without name
  The inurnéd light
Secret as life, signal as flame,
  And in that flight—
Vaster than Moon's o'er Apennine's
  Sepulchral doors
When from the breathless gap of pines
  Golden she soars—

To the tranced rock, dark-sunken, dumb,
Shall murmur, shall smile,
" Glorious the dance of passions ! Come
To life awhile !
I, Beauty, travelling heaven on the hoar
Faint-phosphor'd wave
Of Being, charge ye to explore
And dare the grave ! "

THE VOICE FROM THE COLUMN

I

THUNDER looms over the Thames ;
Warnings have come by the score,
Omens to her wide shore
Light as the flicker of flames
Or gulls come up from the Nore.
But lethargy heavily dwells
On river and dome and strand ;
Cloud embanks the white pinnacles,
Lethargy pale as of spells
Mounts the grey citadels
Muffling the drums and the bells
And leaving a nation unmanned.
If we have sentinels
Where do the sentinels stand ?
One I see watching alone,
And he is a figure of stone.

II

Stationed aloft in the sky
Does he see in this van of the storm,

This cloud-wrack lurid and riven,
His old line of battleships form,
His own rent *Victory*, even—
Their spars with sea-dogs aswarm—
Saluting as each goes by,
Arms and faint voices upheaven,
Their captain's all-daring eye ?
Ah, he that watches alone
Channel and Kentish strand
Is a sentinel only of stone !
God, that yon stone could command !

III

At the post he will not quit
Round him the sunset runs
Sulphurous, like smoke of guns ;
As he stood when he was hit
He stands, with empty sleeve upknit
And eye like a blinded rifle-pit
Still on the harbours opposite,
The cold star on his bosom lit
By the light of foundered suns.

IV

Speak ! for the hour grows late,
Great spirit that we have lost !
What see you across the Strait
Your squadrons so often crossed ?

"I see yonder nations changed
Since the day of Trafalgar.
They are not as we are;
Each is a manful host
Self-disciplined, self-arranged,
Steadiest when threatened most.
I see them from coast to coast
At the destined and dangerous hour
Silent with sense of power
Moving upon one plan,
A post for every man
And every man to his post.

V

"They are not as we are.
They, accounting loss as gain,
Are enrolled, trained, ready to die
For the home-land, hill or plain,
Where first they saw the sky;
An honour which you, true Englishmen,
Evade, to sell and buy.
Why should you, who are by proxy men,
Serve yourselves, when you can hire? . . .
When your London is a loot
And your Westminster on fire;
When your insulted weak complain
Huddled round this column's foot,
You, you will feel no stain! . . .

"So are the nations changed
Since the day of Trafalgar!

What we have been, they are,
And (beat low, muffled drum !)
What they were, we have become !

VI

" Therefore I stand and pray,
I stand and mutter alone
A hymn through my lips of stone,
And these are the words I say :

' O Disaster, woeful and great,
Terror and mournfulness dire !
Since nothing but thy stern brows
Disaster, can save this house,
Sunk and degenerate—
Knock thou at the slumberous gate
Of this mine own people and State
With famine and steel and fire !
Come, thou of the desperate star,
Who know'st that while Man shall care
For riches more than his life,
So long shall the Earth see war,
And that only shall he keep peace
Who for just war prepares,—
That even to guard human brotherhood
All shall need fortitude ;
Come ! And if war must be borne
Make thou equal the shares
Of brunt that each man bears !

Naught but thy terror and pain
Can here sting to life again
The spirit whose trumpet cries
All to self-sacrifice
And valour that makes us men.' "

STANZAS TO TOLSTOY

IN HIS OLD AGE

I

IS this some glowering Titan, inly bright,
Angered that summer grasses bloom and seethe
Only to taunt him—strange to the upper light—
Born at the mouth of Tartarus to breathe
And lodged where vapour-dripping chasms ensheathe
The groping ire of his tremendous hands?
Are these the thews that kept in swaddling-bands
The wingéd Reason, and would now compel
Beauty, that Spirit clear,
And every art wherein the few excel
Under a peasant's smock to serve as drudges?
Is it one forgetful of a long career
Through many wars and loves, who now begrudges
To youth its fair love-season—one who quarrels
With all not abject—one whose mood would bind
Under one law the wearers of the laurels
Whose feet are on the uplands, in the wind?

II

Or may this peasant demiurge not mask
Mimir himself—the friend of right in hell,
Him that gave Odin on his awful task
Water of insight from the world-deep well,
And stayed as the god's hostage, and so fell?
Perhaps this soul, half-savage, half-divine,
Is some freed ghost—the slave from Palestine,
Grim Christopher, who strove as he had sworn
To bear through the mid-flood
That little Child—so hardly to be borne?
No, no, *this is the prophet of the poor!*
That face is theirs—that heart hath understood
Their piteous certainty in things unsure.
And stay!—those shaggy brows, and haunting them
Unrest, unrest—O in the Dolorous Street
Have I not seen thee in Jerusalem,
With sheepskin coat and hat and dusty feet,

III

Like a poor herdsman, pilgrim from the snows
Far north of Volga, where his little hut
Lay warm, who on some glittering night arose
And blessed his old wife in the dark, and shut
On her the door, and took his newly-cut
Staff from the eaves—a sapling iron-shod—
And set forth for the sepulchre of God?

Yes, thence by great plains, Taurus passes bleak,
And fire-lit caravanserai
On, on—though fever sapped his bony cheek
Month after month, intent and still unbaulked,
Counting the dawns that met his wind-clear eye
Thousands of miles to find it had he walked!
But now—since thou hast kissed the very stone,
Why restless still, gaunt shepherd come so far?
Why mourn because the ray that led thee on
Shines from a long-annihilated star?

IV

The Man upraised on the Judaean crag
Captains for us the war with death no more.
His kingdom hangs as hangs the tattered flag
Over the tomb of a great knight of yore;
Nor shall one law to unity restore
Races or souls—no staff of thine can urge
Nor knotted club compel them to converge,
Nor any backward summit lead them up:
The world-spring wherein hides
Formless the God that forms us, bursts its cup—
Is seen a Fountain—breaking like a flower
High into light—that at its height divides;
Changelessly scattering forth,—in blaze and shower—
In drops of a trembling diaphaneity—
Dreams the God-breathings momently up-buoy
To melt a myriad ways. Those dreams are we,
Chanted from some unfathomable joy.

V

What! Wouldst to *one* conception mould mankind?
Hast thou not felt—on thy lone mountain track
Seeing, from some ridge of forest-rushing wind
Where the oak-boughs overhead wrestle and crack,
Night-plains be-starred with cities mirror back
The naked deeps of stars—hast thou not felt
The whole high scheme wherein we move and melt
With the swift world—that its last secret is
Not Good, nor Immortality,
But Beauty,—once to behold the immensities
Filled with one soul, then to make room and die?
Hence the true faith :—to the uttermost to be
Thyself—to follow up that ecstasy
Compelling—to let being take its course,
Rise like a song, and like a dream be free,
Poised on the breath of its own soul and source :
Enough—the Fountain will re-gather thee!

VI

Rejoice then, Master, at the multitude
Of wills in the many-coloured nations—yea
At the clouds of destinies distinct—the flood
Of exploring visions—all the radiant spray
Of hostile forces on their upward way ;

Spirals of the interweaving elements
And species, these are but the long ascents
Of the self-poised waters of the Universe
Opening like a rose,
Ingathering all it loses—to disperse
Its soul in fragrance on the night's abyss,
Yet to build for aye the rainbow as it flows ;
Rejoice that we have spectacle of this—
Of the Fountain opening, opening like a rose
And Eternal Wisdom rising from its core ;
For the light increases, and the rapture grows,
And the love, in them that perish, waxes more.

LINDISFARNE

OUR seer, the net-mender,
The day that he died
Looked out to the seaward
At ebb of the tide ;
Gulls drove like the snow
Over bight, over barn,
As he sang to the ebb
On the rock Lindisfarne :
" Hail, thou blue ebbing !
The breakers are gone
From the stormy coast-islet
Bethundered and lone !
Hail, thou wide shrinking
Of foam and of bubble—
The reefs are laid bare
And far off is the trouble !
For through this retreating
As soft as a smile,
The isle of the flood
Is no longer an isle. . . .

By the silvery isthmus
Of sands that uncover,

Now feet as of angels
Come delicate over—
The fluttering children
Flee happily over !
To the beach of the mainland
Return is now clear,
The old travel thither
Dry-shod, without fear. . . .

And now, at the wane,
When foundations expand,
Doth the isle of the soul,
Lindisfarne, understand
She stretcheth to vastness
Made one with the land ! ”

CHANT SUNG IN DARKNESS

I

THOUGH the fool—the old gainsayer—
The passionate inveigher
Whose passion is a prayer
To one beyond his view,
Saith, "Is He dumb? Defy, then!
Art thou indignant? Die, then,
Bowed down and battle-writhen,
But never stoop to sue!"
Yet Man, although he grieveth
And the pride of him upheaveth
Still in that God believeth,
Still in a goal whereto
Those heaven-plunging horses
Whose neck no rein enforces,
Unspent as from the sources
Of light and life they flew,
Sweep the earth-chariot. (Never
Shall the Charioteer's endeavour
Govern them—Man for ever
Must bide what they may do!)

And though the breast maternal
Of the stream of lights eternal
Bears down a gorge nocturnal
  Our little raft and crew,
And always wider, dimmer,
The coasts recede and glimmer,
And colder yet and grimmer
  Unfold to oceans new—
Not here my wonder halteth
To trust Whom it exalteth,
Not here my soul defaulteth
  To pay its worship due ;
Yet, yet it mounteth fearing
Voices of darkness, rearing
Challenges persevering
  That nothing can subdue :—

II

"The evil and offenceless
Thou smit'st, and both are senseless,
Against thine eye defenceless
  The false man and the true ;
Our simplest, our sublimest,
Our bravest and our primest,
Are in thy hand who climbest
  The heavens without a clue ;
Crush these, the brazen-throated,
But these, the self-devoted,
The deep-loved and unnoted,
  Why dost Thou crush them too ?
Speak, Thou, who Earth evolvest

And the globe of stars revolvest
And the night of life dissolvest,
  Solve us this riddle too :—
Why to our young committing
The faults of the unwitting
Dost Thou award as fitting
  Irreparable rue ?
Is not thy justice deathless ?
Why let ten thousand faithless,
Wise and unclean, go scatheless,
  But not the faithful few ?
Thy face in cloud enswathing
Why visit'st Thou with scathing
The child, the beast our plaything,
  And them that never knew ? "

III

And God saith, *If ye hear it,*
This weeping of the Spirit
For the world which ye inherit,
  Do I not hear it too ?
Arise, and to your stations,
Ye lighted living nations !
These be my dark foundations—
  To raise them is for you.

O DREAMY, GLOOMY, FRIENDLY TREES!

O DREAMY, gloomy, friendly Trees,
I came along your narrow track
To bring my gifts unto your knees
And gifts did you give back ;
For when I brought this heart that burns—
These thoughts that bitterly repine—
And laid them here among the ferns
And the hum of boughs divine,
Ye, vastest breathers of the air,
Shook down with slow and mighty poise
Your coolness on the human care,
Your wonder on its toys,
Your greenness on the heart's despair,
Your darkness on its noise.

OLD ANCHOR CHANTY

First Voice. WITH a long heavy heave, my very famous men . . . .

(Chorus. *Bring home ! heave and rally !*)

Second Voice. And why do you, lad, look so pale ? Is it for love, or lack of ale ?

First Voice. All hands bear a hand that have a hand to len'—
And there never was a better haul than you gave then . . . .

(Chorus. *Bring home !*)

First Voice. Heave hearty, my very famous men . . . .
(*Bring home ! heave and rally !*)

Second Voice. Curl and scud, rack and squall—sea-clouds you shall know them all . . . .

First Voice. For we're bound for Valparaiso and round the Horn again
From Monte Desolado to the parish of Big Ben ! . . . .

(*Bring home !*)

First Voice. Heave hearty, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home! heave and rally!*)

Second Voice. Bold through all or scuppers under, when shall we be back, I wonder?

First Voice. From the green and chancy water we shall all come back again

To the Lizard and the ladies—but who can say for when? . . . .

(*Bring home!*)

First Voice. Heave and she's a-trip, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home! heave and rally!*)

Second Voice. When your fair lass says farewell to you a fair wind I will sell to you . . . .

First Voice. You may sell your soul's salvation, but I'll bet you two-pound-ten

She's a-tripping on the ribs of the devil in his den . . . .

(*Bring home!*)

First Voice. Heave and she's a-peak, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home! heave and rally!*)

Second Voice. You shall tread, for one cruzado, Fiddler's Green in El Dorado . . . .

First Voice. Why, I've seen less lucky fellows pay for liquor with doubloons

And for 'baccy with ozellas, gold mohurs, and ducatoons! . . . .

(*Bring home!*)

First Voice. Heave and a-weigh, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home ! heave and rally !*)

Second Voice. And drop her next in heat or cold, the flukes of England they shall hold ! . . . .

First Voice. Ring and shank, stock and fluke, she's coming into ken—

Give a long and heavy heave, she's a-coming into ken . . . .

(*Bring home !*)

First Voice. Heave and in sight, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home ! heave and rally !*)

Second Voice. With her shells and tangle dripping she's a beauty we are shipping . . . .

First Voice. And she likes a bed in harbour like a decent citizen,

But her fancy for a hammock on the deep sea comes again . . . .

(*Bring home !*)

First Voice. Heave and she's a-wash, my very famous men . . . .

(*Bring home ! heave and rally !*)

Second Voice. O never stop to write the news that we are off upon a cruise . . . .

First Voice. For the Gulf of Californy's got a roller now and then

But it's better to be sailing than a-sucking of a pen . . . .

(*Bring home !*)

THE QUESTIONERS

I

A MAN made a journey once over half the world
To come at the journey's end to no more than this :
The cottage where he and another had long been happy ;
But lilac-bushes had closed right over the path
And the stones of the place, it seemed, had become alive.

II

Threshold, familiar Threshold, may I not pass ?
Not till thou tell me my name !
Stone of wonder ; on thee were the wedding flowers
When I bore in to my hearth a silken-haired stranger—
Strange unto me was her heart, strange to her mine,
And soft and doubtful she trembled, like the blue eve. . . .
Pass on, pass on !

III

Naked and sounding Stair, may I not pass?
Tell me my name!
Stair of meeting, where nightly I called the call
Of the exultant, the earth-engirdling, the nightingale,
And one from the stairhead, infinite-eyed and slow,
Came down in her gliding brightness into my soul. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

IV

Window, O far-seen Window, may I not pass?
Tell me my name!
Window of parting,—for here would my proud one stand
Arrayed in dreams and roses,—here, if by chance
Any that she loved much, in going looked not back,
Stooped she to mingle sighs and tears with the rose. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

V

Chest, O thou oaken Chest, may I not pass?
Tell me my name!
Coffer of vision; with bloom upon far mountains,

With rays upon ocean isles when their thunders were still,
With these did she weave her dresses, simple and secret,
Fragrant and here compacted, sealed even from me. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

VI

Table, ah! merry Table, may I not pass?
Tell me my name!
Table of honour, for here in the vast evening
On the head of that pale companion, that more than friend,
A man I remember inflicted his lordly anger
In words that return, return, return to him now. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

VII

Cradle, O Cradle, wilt thou not let me pass!
Tell me my name!
Other children she bare, but this, the beloved one,
This was taken from her, this that most needed care,
And the eyes of her turned from earth, and she rose and followed it
At dawn, when the birds and the young children sing. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

VIII

Bed, thou snow-silent Bed, may I not pass?
Tell me my name!
Ask him not, terrible image, ask not, for she
The woman by whom he lay down to whisper,
"Forgive!"
Sings here no more, but only in thoughts of
friends—
Sleeps here no more, but heavened in the souls of
children. . . .
Pass on, pass on!

I HEARD A SOLDIER

I HEARD a soldier sing some trifle
Out in the sun-dried veldt alone ;
He lay and cleaned his grimy rifle
Idly, behind a stone.

" If after death, love, comes a-waking,
And in their camp so dark and still
The men of dust hear bugles, breaking
Their halt upon the hill,

" To me the slow and silver pealing
That then the last high trumpet pours
Shall softer than the dawn come stealing
For, with its call, comes yours ! "

What grief of love had he to stifle,
Basking so idly by his stone,
That grimy soldier with his rifle
Out in the veldt, alone ?

A SONG

HER, my own sad love divine,
Did I pierce as with a knife,
Stabbed with words that seemed not mine
Her more dear to me than life.

And she raised, she raised her head,
Slow that smile, pale to the brow :
" Lovely songs when I am dead
You will make for me ; but how
Shall I hear them then ? " she said,
" Make them now, O make them now ! "

THE CROCUS

I

ON mountains the crocus
Ere hollows be clear
In the bed of the snowdrift
Will rise and appear ;
Aloft the pure crocus
Born under the snow
In the sun is left trembling,
All bare to his glow,
Like the heart of the woman who listens to love in the forests below :

II

The lover speaks.

" *O light-born, how oft*
Shall I drink in, like wine,
Thy body cloud-soft,
Earth's marvel, yet mine ?
How oft shall I dare,
Unabsolvéd by death,
In the flood of thy hair,
In the flame of thy breath ?
From the incense-boat Sun hast thou wandered, a dream from a time beyond death ? "

III

And she yearns to respond
To that strain out of reach,
To that glowing and subtle
Stream-spirit of speech.
But she weeps—ah, too childish
For love is the span
Of the half-bestrung lyre
Of the language of man ;
So she breathes the sun-song of the crocus,—
reveal it, repeat it, who can !

In the Jura,
June 1902.

INSCRIPTION FOR THE SCABBARD OF A SWORD OF HONOUR *

DRAW me not! Let your laurels round me wreathe—
You that have kept, since you began to breathe,
The soul within you ready to unsheathe!

* Engraved on Havelock's sword, presented to Field Marshal Sir George White, V.C.

DAUGHTERS OF JOY

I

LONG, subtle-floating, the choir
Of strings—soft floods of tone—
In pleading dance-measure, invades
Cloud-like the pavement, where
With the night wind's vast lament in mine ears, I
am walking alone.

II

You, from the dance yonder ?
In tears, at this street-corner ?
" I am going home, my friend.
(Strange, that you knew me !)
Dances are not for the sore heart, nor lights for the
scorner."

III

How came you to live so, sister ?
" Jealous was he I cared for—
False, but jealous—he died—

Flung himself into the river ;
And then a child . . . no matter ! What should
the child be spared for ?

IV

" What mattered ? What matters in London
But the play of the iron mill ?
It is full of women who smile
And heroes live upon them.
There, if a love rise in your heart, 'tis that that
you must kill.

V

" Smile under the lamp-glare !
To laugh cracks your painting—
There's no place to weep in there
Or bow the head in silence :
Under an archway the clever children mock at a
woman fainting.

VI

" Sick, hie to the almshouse—
Lie in your shroud, thinking !
Soiled before you have loved,
When you have loved, betrayed ;
And is there, once betrayed, a better end than
drinking ?

VII

" O wiser ones will save—
And then there may be marriage ;

After precipitous years
Settling down (with your past
Always to take the opposite seat) in a well-padded carriage!"

VIII

Through Asia sweeps that voice,
Through Christendom and Jewry.
Look up at the tavern-door—
See! A phantom peering in,
The smile of a daughter of joy on the drawn face of a fury.

IX

Down the dark tremendous vale
Whirling like leaves, O Daughters
Of Joy, O gash'd priestesses
Night-bound, hectic, marred,
Ye that were lovely once as clouds mirrored in waters,

X

To what dominion dire
Flag your fierce wings, till they
Glide through the dense realms lit
Only by eyes of prey?
Whither, O sister-spirits eternal, sink ye away?

XI

"Back to the Past we sink,
Whence the human would be soaring,

To deep-pent Chaos back—
Hold out no hand to us—
Rushing disharmonies, lost, lost, past deploring!"

XII

So the blazing rout shall coil
Unnumbered down for ever,
And the foul shall breed the foul,
And the heavenly heights be far,
While man knows not of love, and cannot curb his fever.

ALMOND, WILD ALMOND

ALMOND, wild almond,
Give counsel to me,
And hush thy fierce lover
The wind in the tree!

Along the night pasture
I've come through the dew
To tell thee, wild almond,
The old songs are true!

Like the flower on thy branches
The heart in me springs
With airs and upliftings
And hundreds of wings!

I, too, have a lover . . .
Keep, keep it from them—
The wise ones that eye me—
Thou whispering stem!

I deal with him coldly—
I dash him with pride:
Yet he comes of evenings
And stands at my side.

O had he entreated
I could have said nay,
But he, he says nothing
And then goes away!

Ah, loves he for ever? . . .
And loves me alone? . . .
These things that men say not
How can they be known?

He may, but he may not—
And I would be free:—
Now play not, now sway not,
Thou little black tree,
Almond, wild almond,
Give counsel to me!

MUSING

ON A GREAT SOLDIER

FEAR? Yes . . . I heard you saying
In an Oxford common-room
Where the hearth-light's kindly raying
Stript the empanelled walls of gloom,
Silver groves of candles playing
In the soft wine turned to bloom—
At the word I see you now
Blandly push the wine-boat's prow
Round the mirror of that scored
Yellow old mahogany board—
I confess to one fear ; this,
To be buried alive !

My Lord,
Your fancy has played amiss.

Fear not. When in farewell
While guns toll like a bell
And the bell tolls like a gun
Westminster towers call
Folk and state to your funeral,
And robed in honours won,

Beneath the cloudy pall
Of the lifted shreds of glory
You lie in the last stall
Of that grey dormitory—
Fear not lest mad mischance
Should find you lapt and shrouded
Alive in helpless trance
Though seeming death-beclouded :

For long ere so you rest
On that transcendent bier
Shall we not have addressed
One summons, one last test,
To your reluctant ear ?
O believe it ! we shall have uttered
In ultimate entreaty
A name your soul would hear
Howsoever thickly shuttered ;
We shall have stooped and muttered
England ! in your cold ear . . .

Then, if your great pulse leap
No more, nor your cheek burn,
Enough ; then shall we learn
'Tis time for us to weep.

IN SUMMER TIME WHEN MARY BATHES

IN summer time when Mary bathes
And floats along as in a sky
O might I be the stream that swathes
Her beauty with infinity !

O might I be that stealing song
The brown bird sings her from above
While in the dark wood, late and long.
She listens, and forgets to love ! . . .

Or else the rose, the rose that bends
To Mary, all its soul to give,
And on her dreamy bosom spends
The only day it has to live !

JEAN RICHEPIN'S SONG

I

A POOR lad once and a lad so trim
Fol de rol de raly O!
Fol de rol!
A poor lad once and a lad so trim
Gave his love to her that loved not him.

II

And, says she, "Fetch me to-night, you rogue,"
Fol de rol de raly O!
Fol de rol!
And, says she, "Fetch me to-night, you rogue,
Your mother's heart to feed my dog!"

III

To his mother's house went that young man
Fol de rol de raly O!
Fol de rol!
To his mother's house went that young man
Killed her, and took the heart, and ran.

IV

And as he was running, look you, he fell
Fol de rol de raly O!
Fol de rol!
And as he was running, look you, he fell
And the heart rolled on the ground as well.

V

And the lad, as the heart was a-rolling, heard
(*Fol de rol de raly O!*
Fol de rol!)
And the lad, as the heart was a-rolling heard
That the heart was speaking, and this was the word;

VI

The heart was a-weeping and crying so small
(*Fol de rol de raly O!*
Fol de rol!)
The heart was a-weeping and crying so small
"*Are you hurt, my child, are you hurt at all?*"

MULTATULI REMOULDED

ONCE lived a Man who from a Rock broke stone—
For little wage, great labour. Hear him groan,
"O to be rich, and lounging on a bed
With sleepy silken curtains at my head!"
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so!*

And he was rich, and on a bed at rest
Of silk as soft as roses. From the west
The King came by with horsemen and patrolled
That land, beneath his canopy of gold.

And the Newly Rich gazed from his lattice; "Why
Have I no kingdom and no canopy?
Happy I were, with just one little thing;
I would have honour! I would be a King!"
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so!*

And he was King. With horsemen for a screen
And cloth of gold to fringe his palanquin.

But one day, riding in a desert place,
The King grew angry. The Sun scorched his face.

"What is this Sun that doth my face devour—
Heedless of princes at their height of power?
Had I his room, and the arrows of his pride
Vast as the air, I should be satisfied!"
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so!*

And he became the Sun. Jovial he sent
Arrows abroad to search the firmament
And bake the fields. Everywhere did they pass
And scorched the faces of Princes like the grass.

Till came a Cloud, that darkly overmisted
The plains, and all his sheen of rays resisted.
Long, long he battled, but at last avowed,
"My light is vanquished. I would be that Cloud!"
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so!*

And he became a Cloud of gloom and rain
That cooled and made green pastures of the plain,
Till the floods rose. Houses and herds were swept
Away in rivers, and the homeless wept.

And the Earth became a wholly flooded field,
Save for one Rock therein that would not yield.
Wildly the streams beat; it withstood their shock.
Then the Cloud, sullen, yearned to be that Rock.
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so!*

And the Cloud became a Rock. Stark he remained
Still, whether summer riped or winter rained.
And there came a Man into his solitude
With pickaxe and with hammer ; one that hewed
Stones from the Rock. And the Rock groaned, oppressed,
"Whose heavy Hammer strikes so sore my Breast?"
And prayed at length. "Deliver me who can !
Make me a Hammer-wielder—make me Man !"
And there came an Angel, saying, *Be it so !*

And he became a Man, old, feeble, bent,
Who for small wages and long labour spent
Broke stones under a Rock, and was content.

* * * * *

Then the Earth-Spirit, an Enchanter wise,
Charmed at complete success of his device
Approached, rubbing his hands in genial wise,
"See now the empty Bubbles that enamour
You, the Enactor of my Fable, Man !
Since you have ended just where you began
Confess how futile was the wish to rise !" . . .
And the Stone-breaker pushed up, in mild surprise,
His spectacles, that Questioner to scan :
"Not so ! The World's a Bubble, and mere Glamour ;
But just to have been the round, and learned the grammar,
Contents me with my Sitting-pad and Hammer !"

CHORUS AT THE GREEN BEAR INN

Traveller. RUDDY old Shepherd, blithe of cheer,
Chorus. (*Here's to the leg that's lusty !*)
Traveller. When comes to you the pick of the year ?
Chorus. (*Mark what he says . . . he's trusty !*)
Shepherd. "When I watch yon Fire in the chimney roar. . . ."
Chorus. (*What in the embers dreamt he?*)
Shepherd. "And sparks flee up from the embers' core. . . ."
Chorus. (*Fill up his can—it's empty !*)
Shepherd. "While out on the moorland gale I hear. . . ."
Chorus. (*Here's to the woes we bury !*)
Shepherd. "Some Fiddle, ranting and rovering near ! . . ."
Chorus. (*Hail to that fiddler merry !*)

Shepherd. "Yon Fire, so great and so quick with glee. . . ."
Chorus. (*Here's to the world so stormy !*)
Shepherd. "Is Love, the breath o' the world, you see. . . ."
Chorus. (*Here's to the mother that bore me !*)

Shepherd. "And . . . hark to the Fiddle! . . . That's Hope! Play on. . . ."

Chorus. (*Fiddle, we send a chorus!*)

Shepherd. "Idling and wheedling, and come and gone! . . ."

Chorus. (*Long may it march before us!*)

TO A NIGHTINGALE HEARD UPON A HILL-TOP BEFORE DAWN

YES, Nightingale, I lie awake
And wondering hear thee sing
Over the deep world from thy brake
While every other thing
Sleepeth—the deep world like a lake
Stirred round thee, ring on ring !

More than the chanters of the light
Thy passion men confounds
Because like ours 'tis born in sight
Of that which hath no bounds :
How the dark-streaming infinite
Wells in those golden sounds !

Some traveller once in Himalay
Chanced on a tribe so lone,
So dungeoned from the world away,
They deemed it all their own,
And any human race but they
Incredible, unknown.

But up, up where the snowy crest
Of Elburz mounts the blue
And Caucasus sinks east and west
Precipitous, some few
Clansmen are found, high on its breast
Where half the earth's in view ;

And these by that great prospect thrilled
Perhaps, in joy or fear,
Poor hunters wild and rudely skilled,
Have raised an altar there
" *To the God Unknown ;* " and this they build
Of horns of goat and deer.

Like thine, their dark and lofty song
Where shining gulfs expand
Beyond the Caspian—Death, Time, Wrong
That few can understand—
Is launched, and low and clear and strong
Floats out to all the land !

THE GEMLESS RING

AH, hoop of gold that binds the maid
Within thy faery circuit strayed!
No gem of murdered blood divine,
No dragon green of jasper's thine,
No piping shepherd-boy and flock
Drowsed on the Ethiopian rock
And sovran 'gainst the Bacchic mist
Sleeps in thee, shut in amethyst;
Nor Isis in chalcedony
Protecteth, floating fadelessly.

Why hast no serpent-wreathen wand
Bescored on thee by diamond?
No Wingéd Foot, departure's mark,
Treading out Life in garnet dark,
Or signed in gloomy emerald
Where stands Serapis pedestal'd
Mid sceptred Æons plumed and starred?
No Name they write on Indian sard
Nor dreaded word from Dian's zone
Legends thee, seal without a stone!

Yet, seeing no mage since time began
Hath found a greater talisman,
Since puissant was thy gleaming pure
Both to preserve and to allure,
Destroyers of this amulet
May look back, and lament thee yet !

Thou hast outweathered many an age
Hid in the missal's burning page ;
Queens unto Christ in pilgrim guise
Tossed thee, with prayer for paradise,
And felt thee rained from Zion's gate
Back to the cold hand laid in state !
Over the fiord of spirits gone
I hear great harpers harp thee on ! . . .
But who can now thy bond endure ?
Farewell ! thou art too plain and pure !

THE REQUITAL

WHAT shall I give you, woman dear ?
Kiss for your eyes, pearl for your ear,
Praise to requite you,
Toils to delight you,
Or trophies that shall leave your name
Canopied by outlasting fame ?
Ah no ! much less !
Give me, O give me faithfulness !

Kindness I'll give—with sovran care
Harbour you like some temple fair,
With care that shields
Your way through fields
Flower-soft, and makes the wise of ages
Only your ministers and mages . . .
Nay, would you bless,
Give me, O give me faithfulness !

Take this instead—this throbbing rose,
Passion, whose cloudy cups disclose,
Core within core,
Sea-and-moon-lore,
And the breath of lovers, whose exchange
Of being and worship still is strange . . .
Fair it is, yes . . .
But give, O give me faithfulness!

'Tis true, you came with silvery zone
All the world's dayspring in your own;
True that you gave
All he could crave;
True, on your bosom warm and pure
His children smile in sleep secure;
But no! Ask less—
He will not give you faithfulness.

THE REPARATION

WHEN Man was hounded from glens of Eden, a rover,
By reason of her, his mate,
And under the pair lay the stone of the world, and over
Terrors of Night and Fate,
O then did the sorrowful hands of the Woman discover
A roof against despair,
And spread for the rebel head of her dreaming lover
The shadow of her hair !

DARK, DARK, THE SEAS AND LANDS

DARK, dark the seas and lands
Between us lie !
And to taunt these banished hands
Hang mountains high ;
Yet to-night your voice from home
Most strange, most clear,
Over the gulfs hath come
Gloriously near !

Long since, in the desert's heat
I swooned, I fell,
To find your love at my feet
Like the desert's well ;
Now, loftier and more profound
Than the dawn at sea,
Your spirit, like heavenly sound,
Delivers me !

ODE
ON ARMENIAN MASSACRE

To Lord Salisbury

I

THEY escape to the quiet mercy of the snows,
These pledged Armenians. And shall now thine hand,
That sworn and signatory hand, be slack,
Or to defilement in their smoking land
And furnace of despairs consign them back ?
Grown old thou wilt not fail us ? Thou must keep,
O son of Burleigh, rank with them that drave
The towered Armada from the wave
To sort with that great company asleep
On whom heaven-windowed Westminster for aye
Rains glory, and the misty choir
Age-builded aisles and blackened vaults profound
At chantings quaked out of the footworn ground
Resolve their densities to fire,
Turn the cathedral's self into a lyre
And frame of giant sound
That cleaves through stone and dust,
In dirge and triumph dire,
From them that knew to trust,
And to command, the anger of the just !

II

Refuse, captain of England, to convoy
Only the crawling hulls of merchantmen
That hug safe coasts for bales ! Be ours the flight
Of the old sea-riders that with little sails
Fronted the rimless ocean with delight,
And took the frownings of a world with joy !
O hear the counsellor that hath no part
In learning of the counter and the mart,
Wise to refrain, be thou as wise to dare ;
And by some messenger of noble heart
Speak, for our kindred race of Isles and Seas,
To the Republic in the West ! Declare
The solemn duty fallen to us and these,
In yon default of nations, to repair
The desolation of the lands of dawn
And worship to the humbled East restore,
That Tigris and Euphrates bear no more
Blood from their snowy founts to Babylon,
Nor wash with ashes of the meek despised
That grave of the mother of men civilised.

III

How long shall he of the hell-daring lute,
Genius, the sad deliverer, be mute ?
How long sit ye, grey parliaments, in fear ?
Now the blind wraths of the cloud-bewildered wave
Doom, and sea-lights our fathers lived to rear
Range the abyss, but none put off to save !
How long, Atlantic powers, that freed the slave

And keep in chains the sea, shall vengeance pause?
By counsel first, if counsel still avail,
But by the edge of death, if counsel fail,
Take ye from that Arch-fear his wanton reign
Who by the silent Greeks remembered main
Gods it on earth against the human cause!

Written in September 1896.

THERE COMES A MOMENT OF THE TWILIGHT

THERE comes a moment of the twilight,
The red-forged Orb at his vastest
Sinking (how swiftly !) behind black-ridged
Intricate harbourage of trees,
When the brilliant beds of flowers, amid the dimness
Of warm lawns silently resplendent,
Flame-cups of red gold, quietude
Of dusky companies of lilies,
Armies of sapphires and of purples,
Burn with a light not theirs.

They utter, they give off a singing vapour,
Discompose into rumour as of voices,
A troubled ground-swell, every chalice
Steamy with a yearning murmur
After the descended sun !

Something of the late huge riot
Of cloud-light, to them bequeathèd,
Dwells on, confused, in them,

Thousand by thousand awaiting
Frail-hung lanterns of some gala
Invisible.
Even so are ye
All standing now at such a moment
Smoulderers objectless, uncertain,
Artists and priests of all religions,
Shapers of clay, sound, colour,
Shapers of perfection and of symbol,
Shapers of passion and of awe!
Hath it gone, last hem of all that glory
For which we came to be?

KILLARY

I

WHEN all her brothers in the house
Were lying asleep, my love
Ran before me under the bend of boughs
Till we looked down from above
On the long loch,
On the brown loch,
On the lone loch of Killary !

II

Together we ran down the copse
And stood in the rain as close
As the birds that sleep in the soft tops
Of the tree that comes and goes
When the morn moon,
When the young moon,
When the morn moon is on Killary !

III

In tremblings of the water chill
Swans we saw preen their coat,

Biting their plumes with stoop'd bill
And quivering neck, afloat
On the brown shade,
On the deep shade,
The shade of hills on Killary.

IV

" Why pale, my belovèd, now
When the first light 'gins to beat ?
No sun of autumn is rich as thou,
And honey after thy feet
Shall rise from the grass,
From the wet of the grass,
The brow of the grass over Killary ! "

V

" My grief it is only that thou and I
Must part, like swans of the flood
That rise up sorrowful into the sky ;
For one goes over the wood,
And one oversea,
And one oversea,
And one oversea from Killary ! . . .

VI

" Ah, the little raindrops that hang on the bough,
Together they may run,
But never again shall I and thou

Meet here in the morning sun. . . .
We shall meet no more,
We must kiss no more,
We shall meet no more by Killary!"

THE QUEEN OF GOTHLAND

To M. S.
this portrait.

THE QUEEN OF GOTHLAND

I

HO ! ho ! the Count was not of those
That care for treasure-trove !
Ploughland and forest, quarry, fell,
Castle and pleasure-grove,
All that his house had heaped, he took
And shared among his mountain folk,
And wasted as they throve ;
Then flung the rest, all that he had,
Round the white neck of love !
Ay, in pearls for his young love.

Make no mistake ! the squanderer knew
Shrewdly may be as I or you
The virtue that's in gold ;
But this despotic man we lost
Had faults and manifold.
He had a something in the brain
Never could bide his proper gain ;
He was not of the Clan of Take,
The Clan of Get and Hold !

There, in a savage discontent,
The Count would sit receiving rent;
He took the silver that you brought
And thrust you back the gold.
"I'd hew with you down to the rock,
Down to the rock!" he cried,
"Then could you know the man that's stript
And working at your side!"
Well, he stript himself, he showed his thew,
He bared himself in pride,
He dared with you, he shared with you,
And you for him had died!
And you heard his simple gusty laugh,
And felt, and you were sure,
'Twas thirsting for the fire of life
That made and kept him poor;
And that he would keep the fire of life
As pure as fire is pure!

So impetuously, so seriously,
Then grimly, nigh deliriously,
He fought, he played, for love;
But he lost, and vanished utterly.

II

Naught that shy beauty promised him,
Merry had watched him crave:
And the day she married Gothland's King
When her father's town was brave
With flags, drums, seething battlements,
After a duel for her sake

Wounded and nigh the grave,
(Think you *that* could his spirit break
Or force the Count's head on his breast
Like any quivering slave ?)
He arose, lean in his uniform,
Pulse not a stroke too fast,
Waited her brilliant-eyed approach,
And saw her start aghast,
And she, the drawn face and the frown.
On gallant knee downcast
He tendered her his secret gift,
The poor enthusiast !
Out of his square palm's brawny foil
She took the pearls. Faint gems entoil
Clasp-opals of their massy coil.
Then, with a jibe, he passed. . . .

She stood, she sighed, she took the gift
Because it was the last ;
Took that amazing gift of pearls
Unweeting all he gave
Thrice-pitying, reluctantly,
As 'twere a soul to save.

That night she wore the coil of pearls
With her bride's diadem,
And she locked away that coil of pearls
With many a holy gem
In a casket in her chambers high,
And thought no more of them.
Ah, dark towers ! Fort of faerie,
Steep as Jerusalem !

III

Three years ; and one night there was found
Up to the heather drawn,
The Count's boat, lying on the moor—
Like a young seal that tries to flee
Inland, instead of out to sea—
But no boat there at dawn !
Some said he had appeared that night,
Dour as a thunderstroke,
And asked her for no more than this,
That she should slip the yoke :
Make off then in the dawning dim
Came she but in her smock to him,
And for kingdom, share his cloak !
Told how she seized a riding-whip
And slashed across his bearded lip
The hardy libertine.
But who puts faith in such a tale ?
What eye the Count had seen ?
No ! . . . Winters wore. The King grew bald.
All Gothland was serene.

IV

But at last the lady pale, so pale,
Who never could take rest,
She stept down from the bed of kings
And rode to south and west.
From the lightly-faithful bed of kings
She rode, they say, and drest

In her white silken wedding-gown
Alone through many a drowsy town;
Hardly she drew the rein by night
For the fire within her breast.

About the peak'd and stormy towers
At the corners of her keep
Had marched a music old and proud
For the waking of her sleep,
But the heavy voice she listened for
Was the sea's against the steep.

"Take him away, your nimble hawk
That comes again to hand!
Bring me the bird that shows the pass
Into a blither land,
And the tune I never heard before
Is the tune I understand!

"O where shall I now pin my faith
Who greatly have believed?
And whither shall I fly my heart
That so hath been deceived?
It does no good to speak aloud
Save to the wind, save to the cloud!

"Make room, thou southland mountain-top,
Make room for my disdain!
Make room, Ægean-breathing Dawn!
Cypress above the plain,
I will inhabit silence; then
I shall begin to reign.

" I had a cousin—a mad king.
Why mad ? He had a play
Played out for him, and him alone.
I'll have, ' The Death of Day ! '
The boards are bare, the footlights lit,
The house fills, tier on tier,
The vasty arch bedazzles. . . . Now
Among the oaks and deer,
With every grass-blade lustred through,
What tragic Gods I hear!

" As Muse, I'll listen. My thick hair
Night-heavy, my sole crown,
Falls round me like a close despair
And veils me on the throne.
See ! The players change as quick as kings !—
The eve-mist changes. So
I'll waver with unstable things,
And go with things that go !

" I will go wander like a wave
And lash me to the mast,
And sail by many a siren cave
Till peril's charm be past.
I'll wash this gaze in gaze of flowers
In some Greek olive glen
And listen, till I find my soul
In places far from men.

" O the world's ill, if even I
Whose whimsies none resist—
Who, satiate with all-yieldingness,
Can change lands as I list,

Yet find Death sweetest of all tales
Of Life the rhapsodist !
If I too sharp-set find the yoke
Of earth's monotony,
Then for these poor and common folk
What must it be, what must it be ?

" I will forget them. I am wronged.
How can I give them ease ?
I will forget them—play the Muse
Of all bright ironies.
Since what I asked the Gods refuse,
I will have Glory's kiss !
Failure that's great—among great things
At least deny not this !

" Now for the prey I cannot kill,
And the hound that comes not back,
And the horse I cannot break at will,
And a leap to end the track !
For my soul it shall be hunting still
Though the night it may be black.

" I am a queen, and round a queen
Rumour hath ever rung ;
But rather than such honour grant
Me, Glory, to die young,
Full of the passion thou didst plant,
Sure that I could have shaped the chant
Woman hath never sung !

" Blood of grapes stretch me not to drink,
But juices more sublime !

I'll see the world's green acre shrink
While life is at the prime !
I'll lift my horse up on the brink
As he had wings to climb,
And pledge thee, Glory, ere I sink
Into the night of time ! "

V

She rode resolvèd and amain,
She rode for many a year,
A vagabond and scholar queen
Whose body knew no fear
(Her fear was of the spirit pent
For madness dogged her as she went)
And she chose the foam for outrider
And the wind for cavalier.

Became she poet ? She became
Empress, and in a line
Of oldest lineage she was first
Of ladies that must shine.
And to her deserted spouse returned—
Returned, at what a cost !—
Mute, mute she wore her dazzling thorns,
But all dear things she lost.
For chance among her nearest kin
Strange havoc did contrive ;
In the blood of all whom she held dear
The gods made horror thrive ;
Brothers and sons were shamed and shot,
Or sisters burned alive.

She stared into Fate's eyes accurst
And, seeing no glint divine,
Closed her wise tragic lips, this first
Of ladies that must shine.
Ah, dolour that might never speak ! . . .
Yet as the herd-boy on the peak
Gathers the forest's roar and shade
Into the pipe he idly made,
So in this ditty even I
Would murmur all that mighty sigh !

VI

At last, in a grove of ilexes
Off Epirus, in the sea,
She built a Grecian pleasure-house
Altar'd to poetry
And Heine. (May the clan that own
The palace now adore his stone
As piously as she !)

" Here, an old woman, I will rest,"
She said ; and from the north
Sent for a girl's toys, jewelries.
But lo ! when they came forth
In that clear Adriatic morn,
On the cold imperial bed
The coil of pearls, so long unworn,
Lay lustreless and dead.

" Tell me now, Monks of the sea-crag,
Men wise in country lore,

Whose bee-hive cluster of white cells
Juts on the western shore,
Where shall I sain them back to white
And how sick pearls restore ?" . . .
And one looked up from his lentil pan,
Like an olive, silvery-hoar,
And this Monk they sent her for a guide
To row her out at the ebb-tide.

He rowed her in a little boat
That secret place to learn,
His wrinkled hands pulled on the loom,
His eye serene and stern,
A Charon in the boat of doom,
Unblinking, taciturn.

There was gold broom on the sun-bright hills
And the plash of oars in chime,
And there came a smell from the rocky bays
Of lentisk-bush and thyme.

" Whose hold is that on the hot crag,
Yon rosy crag sea-gnawn ?"
" A ruin of a spendthrift race
Of despots long withdrawn.

" Deep, deep beneath it runs the pool
Where your sick pearls must lie ;
At its mouth is the sea-otter's hole,
And a slant slit is the sky.
And the walls aloft are green with slime,
And the sea-birds' dung is soft with time
Along the ledges high."

Into that cranny darkly down
They went the sea-birds' way—
Above their heads the mountains leant
That plunge down to the spray—
Until they heard the black wave wash
That never sees the day.

She took the pearls from her sere breast
And kissed them, long unworn,
She kissed those pearls as they had been
The love-babe never born,
And she dropped them in the salt, salt wave
With tears of the forlorn.

" Lie there ! " he cried, " O lie there long,
Beneath the break of foam !
Far have ye wandered, suffered much ;
To that ye wandered from
We give you back, thrice-noble pearls,
Until ye shall become
Perfect again and pure again
In that which is your home ! "

And swift came rushings through the air
Of cold and wingéd things
Alarmed escaping from their lair,
Blasts and torch-flickerings.

" Who art thou, visionary Monk,
That speak'st this requiem ? "
" One that sees peak'd and stormy towers
Steep as Jerusalem,

Battlements grey, and over all
One window like a gem,
And a young girl, weeping on the wall,
That wears a diadem !"

* * * * *

She took the high torch from his hand
And searched till she discerned
That manèd visage, trace by trace,—
The solemn-sounding mountain's base
Rough'd to a humorous savage face
Wherein the granite burned. . . .

" How sharp," he said, " that last, last hour
Of departure's sick delay
Prints on the warm, cleft, trembling soul
The things it takes away !
In the middle garden by the shore
The fountain's still at play,
And its spouted rabble of loud drops
Hangs in the evening still !
November woods becloud the turf
By the dove-house squat and chill.
It is night ; and a ragged thunder-storm
Comes up over towers and wood,
And the white doves beat in a throbbing swarm
Against the thunder-cloud.
We pace together up the sward
As they circle over the firth ;
And the moonfall on thy coifless hair
Makes glamour of the earth. . . .
And then, leaning on the parapet,

'Ah!' thou saidst, 'before passion's voice
All, all is overset,
But what is that "all" worth?' thou saidst.
Well, hast thou learnt it yet?

"Why, great one, never kneel to me!
We are too wise and old;
Thou hast brought back the young man's pearls
Before his heart is cold! . . .
Calm, calm's for all such agonies
As happened long ago!
Calm is the Earth, though from its side
A moon was torn. What woe!
Yet Time hath filled the wound with salt
And solitary flow.

"We were too passionate and hard
To mingle each with each.
Thou hadst to be thyself—to become
Thyself the last, high, tragic song
Of this our piercèd Christendom,
Too high, too sad, for speech! . . .
Saved in some vessel we see not,
Some dark urn of the Lord,
Is shed this everlasting loss,
This waste of spirit poured.

"And for me, more than I need is mine;
Labour of the hands is mine;
Content, among my lentils here,
And the obscurity divine."

VII

Well, she went back, she faced her fate,
Her tasks, without demur ;
Amid the shining cares of state
Were lentils grown for her.
But not long had the pair to wait,
O not long to endure !
A year thence, at the hour she fell,
Stabbed by some crazy boor,
The old Monk in his convent died
The death of the obscure.

And the pearls ? Ah, blithe rejoicing pearls,
Snapt is your rusty chain !
Sucked out to the sea-darkness fresh,
Released and born again,
Somewhere beneath that sunlit crag,
That blue Ionian main,
Freely (for who shall seek the fort
Angelokastron ?) there
Unknown of all men ye may now
Beauty and sheen repair !

THE SHEPHERD

To H. W. N.

I

WHEN I am worn amid the burning dust
Of high-wall'd cities, round the mill-track drear
Bearing the beam and yoke, as mortals must
Who by their lower selves win lodging here,
Oft, as among some ancient desert horde
Their King flung up the netted bird on high
Whose flight should show the nearest pass whereby
To cross the mountains from the sands abhorred,
Even so cut I the cord,
Dismiss my soul on its delirious wings
Spurning the dull den where the body dwells
In yon green cabinets of grass to stray,
Along the liquid mirrors to delay,
Yon, in the wishèd land of wells,
By the throbbing of full waters, gleamy springs !

II

Distilled out of the swift enormous skies
But nursed in darkness old, inscrutable,

Twixt Sinodun and its twin mount Harphill
By Thames I know a Wood-Spring takes its rise,
Azured and overbough'd, a margin still
Untainted, only known to beasts and birds,
And alive, like all things wholly beautiful,
Exquisite, deathless, seeming self-engendered.
Sand-pulses, bubbles, are its only words ;
And wide the region of the mountain'd earth
Cistern'd for the making of that little pool !
And there what spirit-freshness comes to birth !
Thither I voyage, to a dream surrendered,
And rays are golden there, and noon is cool.

III

Or I, a Shepherd, am in Thessaly ;
And the twilight village cries " Hath he not come
On the last scented load of myrtle home ? " . . .
He sits in the great valley wide and still
Blocked by the snow-capt Mountain, and his sheep,
Tawny and dark, roam far and crop their fill
Along the pastures, by the river deep.
His wandering fingers teach the stops at will
Melodies cool as water, soft as sleep.

IV

And once to him the Mountain spake,
" Climb ! Here canst larger music make !
I know thy heart, and all its ache !
For, since thy craving is and ban
Conquest of earth to plan,

And to come up as if by right
All the kingdoms of earth to scan
With the soul and the sight of a seraph,
The strength of a man,
Therefore, lest it should break,
Thy heart for my arch-lute I take ;
My tarns and ghylls shall sing through thee
All Olympus and all Thessaly ! "

V

Then, lo, on a peak above the peaks am I !
Above the waves of forest, vale and fell,
Above the torrent's voice, the clink of bell,
The flock, the scythe, of sparse humanity ;
Above the earth-enflamed ring of sky
That hems our footing ; so I stand alone
Isled in the last and dreadful light on high
And sovran silence of the air and stone. . . .
Slowly the plains, those warm and breathing plains,
The hearth-lit villages that sleep and play,
Whose ceaseless blood and its in-dwelling pains
In volumes of sea-darkness surge and sway
In the heart most solitary, sink away. . . .
Nothing but starred immensity remains.

Chilly withdrawals yours, vast Light, vast Love !
Though the skies swarm with tremblers faintly bright
I am exile in this glimmering infinite ;
For centuries Man may see but stars above !

Yet shall those summits of scarred ages burn
Afresh, and all those lights be quenched in One !
Pure new breath shall arouse
Our sunk horizons and our sapless boughs !
The wrinkled Æons brood on that return,
And seal'd in's prison-house
The changeless blood keeps memory of the sun.

VI

And so, when Night hath rolled away undone,
Joyful my foot is bounding down the peak ;
Rich-memoried, I am eager for the yoke,
Like some young torrent swollen white with rains
How willing then my strength rejoins the plains !
" Where is our Shepherd ? " cry the village folk. . . .

He sits in the great valley wide and still
Block'd by the snow-capt Mountain, and his sheep,
Tawny and dark, roam far and crop their fill
In the long pastures, by the river deep ;
His wandering fingers teach the stops at will
Melodies cool as water, soft as sleep.

STANZAS ON POETRY

HERE in the Pentecostal woods are seen
Mid glens of floating odours, shifting sheen,
Motionless yews and scintillating green
Of birches young, and here in wandering mood
Our feet brushed through the drifts of listless leafage
When quick and flame-like Spring was on the bough.

Distinct each budding tongue could tell its tale
And underfoot the tide of flowers, that pale
Firmament, so eternal and so frail,
Powdered the woody bosoms of the coombes,
And everywhere infinity was hinted
Stealing in clouds of gems into the air.

And here, in stillness of this stately place,
I asked my musing friend to lift the grace
On me of her immortal speech and face,
And to reveal how in this roaring world
A man may tune his lips, and she replied :
"So sing, that nothing of thee shall grow old !

" This is your end, and this is your reward,
To become attuned to the universal chord
Wherein all life makes answer to its Lord.
O spectator of the sun and night and sea
Great waters with a song-born ocean sighing
Revolve their everlasting floods through thee !

" Lift up thy head ! tear off the servile mask,
Salute the dead, and take on thee their task !
In thee man's sleeping powers assemble. Ask,
Choose—wilt thou like a cow-boy ride savannahs ?
Attend the Delian high solemnity ?
Unbury Egypt, or by Newton kneel ?

" Be thou, thrice-hot forespurring heart and sight,
A wingèd creature, questing for delight,
Released from bonds, and by augurial flight
Before the gaze of the earth-hungering horde
Show thou the pass over Caucasus, the barrier !
Or divine thou the sunk waters of the Moon !

" Chant like the head of that slain king they found
The night after the battle by sweet sound
In a clump of rushes on the battle-ground,
That sang at his beheaders' feast so true
They would kneel to the pallid lips upon the pillar
For saving wisdom and clear prophecy !

" Inscription on the lightless dungeon be !
Far trumpet that may set the prisoner free !
Ray from the battle-ship on Futurity !

Soar, thou blue mosque of lapis-lazuli
Whose mortar with some incense hath been
mingled,
Fragrant for ever at the sultry noon !

"In thee Man's choir assembles, and finds tongue!
Thy soul like Roland's horn of echoes flung
Must seize the mountains that it gropes among,
Must strike and must betray the Invisible—
Black peaks that like a crowd of humbled Gods
Attend the benediction of the Dawn !

"Sing Valour, from the cradle to the pyre !
Sing thine own country's glories, grief and ire ;
Hear thou the voice of every greening briar ;
And in thy song let all her woods be temples,
Her rude heights and calm headlands clothed in
foam
Nerve thee, and be within thee fortitudes !

" Sing Love, and all that counteth not the cost ;
And many a beautiful and unborn ghost
(Even as the ever-widening starry host
Steals from the luminous blue gulfs of evening)
Softly shall join your ring of auditors
Outside the sitters round the Tavern-fire ! "

" Goddess," I cried, " the task is far too great !
Spare, overwhelming energies of Fate !
Turn aside—shoulders cannot bear your weight;
Descend not on us weaklings, us the living ! "

"I speak to Man!" she said. "The mill-wheel turns:
Between thee and thy son lies but a sleep.

"Is not the statue inwardly impaled
On iron, when 'tis set aloft and hailed
For beauty? Smiling have my noblest failed,
Playful as Socrates, the ungainly seer,
Or the glorious Persian, whom when Balkh was stormed
Turanians at his blackened altar slew.

"There is no light except the light they saw!
There is no song except that song of awe,
The slow unscrolling palimpsest of Law,
Where here and there a mighty word ye read
(O rushlights seeking on the battlefield!)
In haste, by the hasty taper of yourselves!

"Thy song shall be imperfect, never fear,
Seeing but the half, the half of it is here;
Yet fall'n to the heart out of the atmosphere
(If the symbol in thy hands ring metal true)
Flake soft electric touches of that Life
Whose heart-beats are sun-rises, slow and clear.

"Do not thy windows every morning hail
The sheen of Thames, curved in the forest vale?
What splendour, though its reach from vision fail!
More than a brief arc you may never scan
Of the sweep o' the world, or the destiny of man,

Yet now begins to dawn on you the curve—
The sense of scale, the orbit's formula.

"Love, Courage, Truth, these are; and while these stand
Who can say Gods inhabit not this land?
If wise men sifting light from Saturn's band
Discern the rainbowed metals there, what wonder
If these passions in your dust shine back to Saturn,
If the Soul, regnant in you, reign everywhere!

"And if the chorded metals and the fine
Elements, in ethereal discipline,
Be spaced about the orchestra divine
So thou canst gauge a gap, and prove the curve
Celestial—even unveil the dark companion
Of devious orbs—may not thy soul intense

"In its unfrontier'd and illumined mood
Hear, far beyond its borders, as it would,
At the due interval, with certitude,
Transcendent harmony, transcendent Good?
The Gods themselves are pipes in one great organ
Wherethrough the nations send their shuddering breath
Until the keyboard's motions die away."

O BIRDS OF THE AIR

O BIRDS of the air—
Wild birds, buoyant, vagabond, light—
Streams may have taught you a stave ;
But how are ye born so sure of your flight
Hence over worlds of the wave ?
Whose mind remembers in yours as it weaves
Subtlest of houses to sway with the leaves ?
We have forgotten the land out of sight—
We build no house but the grave !

I SEEK THEE IN THE HEART ALONE

FOUNTAIN of Fire whom all divide,
We haste asunder like the spray
But waneless doth Thy flame abide
Whom every torch can take away !

I seek Thee in the heart alone,
I shall not find in hill or plain ;
Our rushing star must keep its moan,
Our nightly soul its homeward pain.

Song out of thought, Light out of power,
Even the consumings of this breast
Advance the clearness of that hour
When all shall poise, and be at rest.

It cracks at last—the glowing sheath,
The illusion, Personality ;
Absorbed and interwound with death
The myriads are dissolved in Thee.

ODE

AT ASSOUAN ON THE NILE

Inscribed to W. A.

I

IN your amphitheatres of flood-worn rock,
Granite escarpments that the desert rings
Of quarries whence gray Egypt hewed her kings—
Hail! stark beginnings that the fool can mock—
Sun-obelisks half-hewn, prone architraves—
Hail to you, every scarred and prostrate block!
And hail to you, poor plot of English graves
Ranked in the sun, a little martial flock!
What sudden-quencht, impossible command
Say, were you uttering to this drift of sand
For England? Your command shall be fulfilled.
A temple housing kingdoms doth she build
Whose beams are ye, and whose foundations wide
The bones of sons; and you therein shall bide!

II

There shall be lifted for the Earth at last
One Temple, O my Soul, consummate, fair,
Whiter than lightning, rock-set, and so vast
That the hopes even of the young may enter there!

Round shall it be as that horizon old
About its steeps and clear dominions seen,
And girt with columns in the antique mould,
And doors, one for each nation, stand between
Statues heroic—doors, yea, numberless
And open. Yellow hands and black and white
Shall cast them—so that every race may press
Up always to that altar never cold !

III

There shall be none cast out—nor any fears
Fraternal. Unknown music shall aspire
About that altar, nor shall human tears
Quench the high flame, or still the trembling
choir
Of man ascendant. Chiefest symbol there,
Whereon the eyes of all the host shall wait,
The wingéd chalice of the holy sun
Lifted above the roof from gate to gate.
Its only priesthood thoughts, that range on high
In the soft and changeful vestures of the sky ;
And the slow-built, straggling village of this ball
Thither shall mount to worship One, the All ;
And every soul find there, ere it depart,
That thing which fills the craving of its heart.

THE END

NOTES

TO NEW POEMS

THE longer poems, and most of the shorter, are now printed for the first time. Among the remainder the "Dreamy Friendly Trees" appeared in the anthology entitled "The Open Road." "I heard a Soldier" in an anthology printed in the Transvaal; "The Questioners" in the French International Quarterly *Vers et Prose*, and in the *Fortnightly Review*; and the "Old Anchor Chanty" in the *Gazette of the Naval Reserve* and the *Spectator*, etc.

To a Nightingale on a Hilltop before Dawn

The "traveller" mentioned is Colonel Younghusband. The "clansmen" on the heights under Mount Elburz (or Elbrûs) are the Kysty tribe of the Tchen Tchen.

The Queen of Gothland

The personage portrayed in this narrative may be easily recognised, and it is, therefore, unnecessary to explain allusions.

The Shepherd

In the second passage of this poem (II) I owe suggestions to recollections of an anonymous article in some newspaper. The source escapes me; but may this be my grateful acknowledgment to the writer. I also owe a line and a half to Mr. Hale White.

In Summer-time, etc.

This is merely a variation on an old air.

Apollo and the Seaman

This poem is intended to be accompanied by orchestral music. Closely following its text, the distinguished composer Mr. Joseph Holbrooke has composed a complete Symphony which, it is hoped, may shortly be performed. May his splendid music receive that recognition which, in our day, and for the moment only, is denied to Poetry! In alliance between the arts of Poetry and Music, and in the philosophic ideas they may together convey, lies, I believe, much of promise for our civilisation.

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